Going down with the ship

...anyone had wanted to dismantle Nepal’s Communist movement, no one could have done a better job than Prime Minister K. P. Oli, himself of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) party.

K. P. Oli’s actions first led to the destruction of the NCP. In doing so, Oli took away some veteran war-era Maoist commanders with him and split the Maoist Centre. With Dahal out of the way, Oli aimed his sights at Madhav Kumar Nepal. The Nepal faction is itself divided between those who want to keep the UML, whole, and others that want to form a new party.

Oli’s power games even split the UML. The Mahanta Thakur-Rajendra Mahato led faction has now joined the government with 15 ministers, while former Minister Upen德拉 Yadav and Baburu Shaltari stay out. Oli even replaced trusted Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali with the untested Ratnabu Maharjan.

Some have even seen the appointment as Oli trying to appease the RSS in India. The reshuffle highlighted the government’s inability to focus on protecting Nepal’s interests, with successive governments unable to negotiate a treaty with India.

ministers since the pandemic began, and five since Prime Minister Oli took office in 2018.

It now looks likely that the Supreme Court will reinstate the House of Representatives again on 4 July, and if that happens there will soon be another government in this game of musical chairs. Unless Oli pulls another rabbit out of the hat.

When K. P. Oli was in jail during the Pandem handshake he was an evident chess player and cell-mate Pushpajyoti Acharya remembers him as being a sore loser. To hold on to power, Oli has continuing moves keep the UML intact so that even if the House is reinstated he can still cobble together a majority.

That plan may have been thwarted this week by the Nepal faction selecting Oli’s 6-point olive branch and conditional offer for rapprochement. This leaves things pretty much up in the air till the Supreme Court gives its decision in three weeks.

Some young Turks in the UML have not given up trying to keep the UML united. The trouble is that the distance between Oli and Nepal is too deep. Explains the UML’s Yogesh Bhattrai: “Comrade K. P. Oli is not ready to work with Comrade Madhav Nepal and Comrade Manas Khanal; from his own party, but is willing to share power with Mahanta Thakur and Rajendra Mahato... and Comrade Nepal is unwilling to work with Comrade K. P. Oli, but is happy to form a coalition with Bhar Bahrud deuba, Premchandra and Upen德拉 Yadav.”

Bhattrai asks on social media: “Who, why and for what is this thing dragging on? The root of the problem is that the two leaders cannot get along. To save party unity, they need to find common understanding.”

Kuma Dhar

---

Nepal goes viral

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

---

INDOOR INTERIORS FURNITURE

---

COFFEE SCAN TO BUY ONLINE

---

KANTIPUR KITCHEN

---

OLD CARE SERVICES

---

Watch Nepali Movies, Hollywood Movies, Reality Shows, Short Movies, Web Series & 70 TV Channels

Anywhere Anytime

On

---

download happiness
Nepal goes viral

For once, the world is not ignoring a humanitarian disaster in Nepal. They have even named a variant after us. What the public has done is pushed the attention towards the oxygen and medical supplies to Nepal. Any help is useful in a cross like this, but much of the aid flowing in contains items that Nepal can buy itself.

While there was a dire shortage of oxygen cylinders three weeks ago that led to loss of lives, the nature of the emergency has changed. Nepal’s 20 large factories are working at 100% capacity. The problem is no supply as the factories are working at 100% capacity. When the production of ventilators is increased, the government has to ensure that there are no delays in delivery.

The ‘Nepali variants’ we should worry about are the country’s feckless politicians.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

Most commented

Ujwal Thapa’s light shines on

How to encourage a child’s biophilia for nature

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times

Nepali Times
HIGHEST HONORS COME WITH HIGHEST STANDARDS

We have been awarded the Diamond Status by APEX Health Safety independent audit powered by SimpliFlying for our efforts in ensuring the highest standards of hygiene and safety for our passengers.
3 health ministers in a year

Prime Minister K P Oli has switched health ministers five times since he assumed office in 2018.

When Nepal’s new Health Minister Sher Bahadur Tamang went to Kathmandu Airport on Tuesday morning to receive another international consignment of medical assistance, he was the third Health Minister since the year began.

The consignment was brought into the Cabinet by Prime Minister K P Oli last week in a rush hour in which he included 18 ministers from the Janata Samajbadi Party (DSP), removed prominent ministers from his own, UML, and kept seven portfolios for himself for now.

Two weeks earlier, he had met with the Nepal Communist Party to prevent the DSP from exit to the Oli side after the Supreme Court dissolved the party earlier this year.

He succeeded Hridayash Pratap Rastrypati, who was former minister of federal affairs and general administration. Because he graduated in political science from India, he had been entrusted by the Oli administration to buy 1 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine.

Tripati had negotiated with the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 1 million doses of the Covishield AstraZeneca vaccine and even sent advance payment. It could not be delivered, before India banned the export of 10 million doses.

Tripati later blamed the Serum Institute of India’s representatives in Nepal of trying to take a bigger cut from the next order of 5 million doses for the failure to procure vaccines in time. This allegation was later refuted by representatives.

Nepal’s Distribution & Logistics, which said it was due to India’s ban, and that it was just following the law that allowed 10% commission.

As the second wave ripped through Nepal in April, Tripati said in an interview with Nepal Time that the pandemic had overwhelmed Nepal’s health system and it could not contain the pandemic. He said it was now up to the public to take proper care.

Before Tripati, the health minister was Ghanibahadra Dhakal, who was in charge when the first scandals broke in the procurement of COVID-19 tests kits through Chinese intermediaries, a local company. The kits were found to be faulty and overpriced.

Dhakal was made Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister during a reshuffle last year.

The new health minister Sher Bahadur Tamang as MP is having lobbying for the legalization of the cultivation and controlled sale of cannabis to lift rural livelihoods.

He was at the airport on Tuesday to receive the new arrangement of assistance from Germany under the Kingdom of Nepal’s Civil Protection program.

The material arrived on a Turkish Airlines cargo charter that brought 62 ventilators, 27,500 PPE kits, 500,000 masks, 100 gloves, 200 body bags, 5 isolation centre tents, and 25,000 litres of disinfectants.

Also on hand at the airport to receive the old packages were German Ambassador Roland Siller, EU Ambassador Nicola D’Amico, and Minister Ambassador Perrot Antinna.

Although the official data for confirmed COVID-19 cases has been going down, public health experts say it is an underestimation. The number of hospital cases, ICU patients and those on ventilators are all going down in Nepal’s cities.

The virus is said to be ravaging the remotest villages where access to health care is rudimentary.

They say what Nepal really needs now is vaccines. Some 3.8 million doses are needed immediately for elderly people waiting for their second dose of Covishield, and then for the 18,000 adults in the coming months.

Nepal registered 1,513 new cases on Tuesday and 6,579 cases a day, the 54th number of active cases to 87,736.

The number of COVID-19 deaths in the past 24 hours was 108, with a total of nearly 9,000 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Prathna Bank

Resilient farming

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (MVA), European Union and German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) are partnering in a new project as part of ‘Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID)’ to balance agriculture with the environment.

Called ‘Green Resilient Agriculture Productive Support Program (GRASPP)’ in Nepal, the €12.25 million project aims to foster climate resilience and green economic growth in 10 districts of Karnali and Sudurpashchim province.

It seeks to adapt Nepal’s agricultural practices to climate change by identifying innovative approaches for water-efficient practice and focus on the role of landless farmers and women.

The project is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) with the international Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (CIMMYT) as well as the Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUMI). The Ministry of Land Management Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation (MLMCP) is the lead ministry.

E-consultation for teachers

Via Video Technologies’ VideoPro Web-based online video consultation service, veteran and new teaching staff can fix appointments with over 200 practitioners. The service is available across different languages, and manuals for help are available on www.nesconnect.com/help.

“With the help of the higher capacity of AI, we will mean that the service on the Tumlingtar sector will also come down,” said Dhyani R.K. Nigam, Colombo’s Tumlingtar Airport.

Airport operations on an economically booming region with its provincia to three large hydropower projects on the River Koshi, it is also geographically close to the Makarbar region for floods and earthquakes.

With the development of the Tumlingtar highway, the airport also offers easier access to Tumlingtar, Makara and other areas in Dolkot and Sankhuwasabha.

Plantation amidst lockdown

Early and heavy rains have prompted farmers in four Western Tarai districts to take to the fields quicker than scheduled despite a lockdown in place. Most of the farmers’ crops have ripened and farmers are planning lockdowns to prevent the imports.

Said a farmer in Kailali, Achhaw Sherpa.

Aviation prices slashed

Nepal Oil Corporation has decisively taken the plunge in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) by 29%. Kathmandu airport had the highest price for ATF in the country and cost of transport, but it has been slashed further from Rs. 243.60 to Rs. 248.49.

Subsequently, Nepal Air has reduced rates for charter crop flights. For regular flights from a base airport to any other country, the airline announced that for wide-body aircraft the ticket will decrease by 10% while that for narrow-body will drop by 10%.
Pandemic and the political-economic of oxygen supply

Donations of oxygen plants in response to second wave may force local producers to fold

Koustubbh Dhirval

N epal’s oxygen emergency has eased somewhat as the Covid-19 second wave crested, but the crisis exposed serious gaps in the supply and distribution of medical oxygen with major implications for the future. At the peak of the second wave, many Covid-19 patients died as hospitals ran out of oxygen, but with an overwhelming international response to rush cylinders, concentrators and generators, there is now the risk of over-capacity of medical oxygen post-pandemic.

Nepal’s demand for oxygen cylinders shot up to 50,000 per day during the peak of the second wave in May, with the country’s oxygen factories and hospitals only able to fill 19,000 cylinders every day. In contrast, pre-peak calculations had suggested that peak daily demand would only be 4,000 cylinders. Most of the 25 oxygen factories in Nepal were working at only half capacity pre-pandemic because of low demand. In fact, three of them had closed down. As the second wave hit, the plants went into full-scale production, but a shortage of cylinders meant that the excess production could not be sent to hospitals.

Meanwhile, factories relying on liquid oxygen tankers were affected by an Indian ban on export. Empty cylinders from China, Oman and other countries allowed the shortage somewhat, while oxygen plants struggled with increasing generation capacity.

Too little too late

When the inter-ministerial Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre (ICMC) family reacted, it was too late. Its arbitrary quota system for every hospital proved disastrous. The quota resulted in hard-hit hospitals being under-supplied and some hospitals being unnecessarily saturated with cylinders,” explains Roopy Jirvel, former chairman of Grande City Hospital, saying the problems lay in supply chain management rather than oxygen production.

With mounting criticism for bungling the oxygen quata, the Ministry Health promoted to interministerial, and ordered suppliers to only send filled cylinders to hospitals that had its recommendation letter.

The result was catastrophic, many hospitals were either forced to refuse service or they asked families of patients to bring their own full cylinders.

NEPAL

Total Nepal: 40-50,000

| Demand: Kathmandu Valley | 30,000 |

| Supply: Kathmandu Valley | 6,000 from oxygen plants 3,000 in hospitals |
| Total of Nepal: 10,000 | 1,000 in hospitals |
| Total Nepal: 19,000 |

In a notice posted in mid-May, Kathmandu’s Om Hospital said: “Under the ruling made by the government on oxygen supply, we are unable to take admissions despite our willingness to provide service. We have enough manpower such as doctors and nurses to take care of patients but not enough oxygen supply.”

Families with Covid-19 patients hoarded full cylinders at home, and desperate ones rushed to the gates of oxygen factories to buy the life-saving gas. Municipalities, especially in areas with spare capacity, prevented the transport of oxygen beyond district borders.

Most of Nepal’s oxygen plants are in central and eastern Nepal. The Monsoon-Season industrial corridor alone had five large oxygen factories with surplus capacity, but these were prevented from sending supplies to hospitals in Kathmandu and other areas with shortages.

Lack of training in oxygen flow management and ventilator use did not help matters. Make-shift local isolation centres without medical staff were using full flow to treat patients with mild symptoms. Hoarding and black marketing were rampant, and while large hospitals ran out of oxygen supply, local isolation centres had one cylinder per patient.

In Grande International Hospital, there was a 30% drop in oxygen demand when doctors were more judicious in oxygen use. Still, the shortage was serious enough for some doctors to ration oxygen even for their most serious patients. Others had to make difficult choices between continuing to put patients who had little chance of survival on oxygen, or to give it to those who would immediately recover with oxygen.

Even before the pandemic, government oversight on cylinders was non-existent with no standardisation or regulation in place regarding colour coding, pressure, price rates and deposits on oxygen cylinders.

“I used to get desperate calls at 3 AM from families of patients desperate for oxygen. We were able to call up spare capacity during the second wave, especially in the rest of the country, but the shortage of cylinders for refilling did create a temporary shortage,” says Gautam Shrestha of the Nepal Oxygen Industry Association (NOIA).

After the peak

With the first week of June, Nepal’s Covid-19 curves started flattening with hospitals in Kathmandu and major cities seeing fewer patients who needed to be on oxygen or in ICU.

“Compared to the devastating shortages in April and May, oxygen availability is relatively stable,” says Anup Rastie, a physician at Tiku Hospital. The Ministry of Health also seems to have learnt from its mistakes, and is ensuring a more sustainable supply of cylinders.

However, even as demand for oxygen goes down, overseas Nepalis and international donors are still ranking empty cylinders, concentrators, generators and liquid oxygen tanks on relief flights to Kathmandu. There are more oxygen generator plants serving from Europe, the US and China this week. Concentrators and ventilators from international donors are sitting idle at some district hospitals in western Nepal because no one knows how to operate them.

Domestic oxygen production itself is now reaching 100% capacity. Even though there is a challenge of logistics, equitable distribution and cost, Nepal will soon have more oxygen than it needs. What the government needs to focus on is getting much needed oxygen to rural areas where the virus is spreading house-to-house.

The flood of donated oxygen generators now means that there will be domestic over-capacity just as there was before the second wave. Nepal’s oxygen sector therefore needs to balance supply to meet demand surges and periods of low consumption.

Explains Jirvel: “Ironically, many new donated oxygen plants are being set up in hospitals in response to the second wave, so when this passes, there will be tremendous over-capacity. Regular factories would probably have to function at less than 35% capacity and will be destroyed financially.”

At Tikka Hospital, Rastie says repurposing oxygen equipment could help, but it may not help in the near future. As there is a third wave this autumn, for example, demand would go up again. Besides Covid-19, there is also the pre-existing need for oxygen to treat the rises in respiratory ailments such as CIPDH and heart disease caused by worsening air pollution.

Says Shrestha at NOIA: “One of two scenarios can play out. The government could either continue its reliance on donated oxygen generation equipment rather than driving Nepali producers out of existence, or it could encourage sustained domestic production to meet a spike in demand during future outbreaks.”

Last month, reports of Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants failing in hospitals, and a CCMM finding of 70% oxygen leakage in many hospitals were overlooked. These issues are structural and need to be addressed to help alleviate future shortages.

“The government’s approach to oxygen distribution was myopic,” says Shrestha. “Oxygen is a basic product and can easily be bottled here. But it is unable to consult with as producers, and now all this supply foregone. This just jeopardises our ability to respond to future outbreaks. Plant staff should also be treated as essential workers, and have vaccinations.”

The government and CCMM failed to acknowledge that assistance was needed in the oxygen supply chain rather than merely allowing import of production equipment but hanging on supply management; they failed to take into account domestic generation capacity, thus increasing vulnerability in the future.

The only solution to prevent another oxygen crisis is to stop the problem at the source, by stemming the spread of Covid-19. But with lessons from the second wave are that Nepal’s government, however well-intentioned, oxygen plants need to have standby capacity at hand for future waves.
Locating our gods to bring them home

Nepal’s plundered deities are being traced to museums, collectors and auction houses in the west

Alisha Sijapati

This week, after an expose in Nepali Times online and intense international pressure, France’s Bonhams withdrew five 600-year-old religious objects stolen from Nepal in an ongoing auction in Paris.

The five gilded bronze statues were among 12 unearthed out of a forensics at the Mulchok courtyard in Patan’s Taleju Temple in the 1980s and 1990s.

They were going under the gavel at the Art Boudhanath et Hindou de l’Himalaya in Bonhams, Paris from 1-10 June through Himalayan Art Online till 10 June at an asking price from $3,000 to $5,000

Nepali Times reported on the auction sale on 3 June, followed by messages from Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nepal office of the Paris-based UNESCO to Bonhams and the French government to stop the auction and return the objects.

“I am really happy that our gods are returning home, finally all my research is paying off, this has been great teamwork,” the anonymous administrator of the group, Lost Arts of Nepal, who first traced the gods to Bonhams, told Nepali Times.

By 5 June, Bonhams had replied on Twitter to all officials, reporters, and institutions that had posted about the bronzes, that they were being pulled out of the auction.

Heritage activists said that if the auction had gone ahead, they would have been bought by anonymous collections and could have vanished forever.

The five gilded copper-bronze image of Nityanath, Mahalaxmi, Chumunda, Shiva, Ganes (Bhaktchhe), and Pushchumbdi Haranman (Bhatachhe) that were among 12 on a 19th century bronze at the south door of the Mulchok courtyard of the Taleju Temple in Patan.

On hearing the news, American arts crime professor Erin Thompson said, “Holding this sale sets an important precedent! Paris is no longer the place to go if you want to sell stolen heritage. The case shows that Nepal activists and journalists are paying close attention. The black market in stolen Nepali heritage won’t be able to operate in the dark.”

The whereabouts of the remaining seven statues from the Mulchok bronze is not known, but the cancellation of the auction has raised hopes that they may soon be traced since they cannot be publicly sold.

In Kathmandu, heritage activists including Babrindu Puri got in touch with UNESCO Kathmandu to put pressure on Bonhams before it was too late. He said, “This reminds me of the cultural repatriation of the one from Christie’s in 2013, the withdrawal was a success due to teamwork.”

Replicas of the 12 idols stolen from Mulchok, including the five that were being auctioned by Bonhams, had been made and installed on the place in 2013 during a restoration of the temple by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT).

Another heritage activist, Rehan Misra of the Taranga Museum, said he was surprised Bonhams acted so fast to cancel the auction. He said: “This is a great precedent for the future. It sends the message that Nepal’s antiquities cannot be sold anywhere, anymore.”

The original gilded bronzes from the tower were first recorded in the early 1900s by Indian art historian BN Banerjee in his book, Architecture of Nepal for the Archaeological Survey of India.

Art historian Mary Slusser had also documented pictures of the original statues before they were stolen one by one.

The thefts from Mulchok were documented in German scholar Jurgen Schick’s book, Gods are Leaving the Country: Art Theft from Nepal, in which he writes, ‘One of
The most valuable cases of art theft in Nepal was the plundering of the treasures of the temples of the Kathmandu Valley in the royal palace of Patan.

The auction was first spotted by Lost Arts of Nepal which tracked the ongoing auction at Bonhams, Paris on its Facebook page on 3 June.

Alongside 12 precious bronze of the goddess Durga and her attendants dating to the 16th century were stolen from this site alone, and the torana was stripped bare. Later these bronze were put up for sale by an auction house in Stuttgart in Germany.

"Of 12 statues that were torn out of the torana, thankfully five have now surfaced at the auction in Paris, so we now know where they are. I hope in the near future we will find the other seven as well, and they will be returned to Nepal," says Rohit Ranjitkar of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) who is involved in the restoration of temples and monuments in Patan.

This is the latest in a series of repatriations of stolen Nepali objects from collectors and museums abroad. On 15 April, Nepal welcomed back an 800-year-old Laxmi-Narayan figure from the US, which was stolen nearly 60 years ago from Patan's Durbar Toi.

The statue was first located in 1960 at a Sotheby’s auction and was last spotted at the Dallas Museum of Art. The deity will be restored to its original shrine. Since then, four other statues have been returned to Nepal from collectors and museums in the United States: a 19th-century carved temple base depicting an Apsara, a 14th-century gold seated Buddha in Bhaktapur, Muden, a 15th-century seated Gauhar, and a 14th-century Gharurumbi Shivlinga from Art Institute of Chicago. Emilienne Smith, lecturer of Criminology at the University of Papua New Guinea, says, "Many countries around the world have been deprived of their rich cultural heritage through the exploitative and colonial looting and trafficking of cultural objects. These countries have requested their cultural heritage back for decades, and now it finally seems like the 'repatriation debate' is gaining momentum."

While museums have attempted to work with claimants to return heritage as part of their de-commissioning efforts, much more work needs to be done in this area — and not only by museums, but also by private collectors, auction houses and other stakeholders. Much like museums, auction houses should hold the objects they trade to the highest level of scrutiny," Smith says.

In 2019, a bronze Sarasvati was stolen, the counterpart of the Sundari Chok in Patan Durbar, was also stolen. However, it was recovered by police a year later in Kathmandu before it could be smuggled out of the country. The exquisite carved original figure is now on display at the National Museum in Kathmandu, while the Sundari Chok has a replica bronze created by artists at the KVPT. In 2019, the Department of Archaeology had also approached the KVPT team to make replicas of the 12 figures from the Mulchok of Talung Temple in Patan.

The torana had been stripped bare, and we had to refer to the original photographs to make replicas when we restored the Mulchok," Ranjitkar told Nepali Times.

Suresh Adhikari, a heritage activist and lawyer says that Nepal’s religious objects were being actively worshipped, and are not decorative art to be auctioned or kept in museums.

"They are not just metal or stone objects but our gods and goddesses we have been worshipping for generations and need to revere for generations to come," he says.

Suresh Laxh of Patan Museum says, "I know that they were stolen in the 1970s, and just like the Laxmi Narayan statue that was returned from the US will be restored to its original shrine in Patan Taluk, these figures also belong in Mulchok. These are our gods."
**Virtual Events**

Covid-care fundraiser concert Join British, Indian and Nepali fundraiser concert raising money to purchase and distribute life-saving COVID medication in rural Nepal. The concert will be streamed on FB, TikTok, Twitch and YouTube channels. 19 June

**Mithila Art Session**

Take some time off and register to be a part of Mithila’s virtual Mithila Art Weekly as well as Weekend Sessions for kids and Adults. For details on Mithila House’s Fantastic Page Registration deadline 13 June, 9476098005, 9476087064

**The Guardian Project**

TheLucFoundation has put out an open call for the Guardian Project in support of the Kathmandu South Art and Media Institute for documentary photographers and photojournalists. 50 participants of the project will feature in an online exhibition. Find details at www.lucfoundation.org programmes/open call/

**Art Exhibition**

Look at the Museum of Nepali Arts online exhibition, an exhibiton held in various museums. Details at www.moma.com 17 June

**Tony Hagen Grant**

Unveiling the Tony Hagen Foundation Film Grant, which awards $10,000 to support three young Nepali documentary filmmakers for Kanti, are now open to accept concept papers. Visit the Kanti website for details. Deadline 17 July

**Isolation Reading**

The Wayward Daughter

Sudha Murthy’s collection of short stories for children, titled The Wayward Daughter, is a collection of short stories for children. The stories are inspired by the lives of real-life women. The collection is a tribute to the bravery of these women, whose stories are not celebrated enough.

Old Demons, New Deities

The Wayward Daughter is a collection of contemporary Tibetan fiction available for the western world.

The Remittance Village

A new compilation of short stories by the leading names in Nepali literature, each story focusing on the reality of remittances for rural people, amongst whom there is a common shift from the countryside to the cities.

To Live

Elizabeth Revel’s To Live, fighting for life on the Kilimanjaro, tells the story of her and her climbing companion Thomas, a Kenyan doctor who was rescued from the Kilimanjaro.

Children’s Digital Library

Looking for ways to keep children occupied? The International Children’s Digital Library, which has children’s books from all over the world, including Adventures of a Nepali Fly by Kanu Man Dukal from Nepal.

Comic Library

Find a variety of comic books available from the British Council Digital Library, including the likes of Batman, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and Disney villains.

Poetry Foundation

Discover all things poetry. Browse through collections of classic and contemporary poetic pieces, read, post new, and the entire 10,000 archive of Poets’ Magazine. Go to www.poetryfoundation.org.

Amazing Libraries

Take a virtual trip to 11 historic and beautiful libraries around the world through the Amazing Libraries Google Earth tour, including the New York Public Library, Kemenen in the Czech Republic, and Biblioteca Alexandrina in Egypt.

**Photo Archives**

Nepal Picture Library

Look at archived photographs from throughout Nepal’s history and learn the significance behind them. Visit their website at www.nepalpicturelibrary.org.

Photo Museum Nepal

Assess hundreds of thousands of old historic photographs of Nepal and learn the significance behind them. Visit their website at https://photosmuseumnepal.org

**Digital Archaeology Foundation**

Look at historic photographs from Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur durbar squares, and watch 3D reconstructed videos of temples around Nepal. Visit the Digital Archaeology Foundation website for more details.

**World Press Photo**

Browse through the World Press Photos (https://www.worldpressphotos.org), archive of powerful award-winning press photographs and photo stories from around the world.

**Project Apollo Archive**

The Project Apollo Archive is a collection of photographs, jumpsuit prototypes, and the entire space program, all available for public access. Visit the website at http://apolloarchive.org.

**Air Quality Index**

The Air Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu has been released this week because a spike of the particulate matter (PM 2.5) to 100 in the Kathmandu Valley, and came down to levels below 100 in the Kathmandu Valley. The AQI indicates the formation of micro-particles in the air, which can cause irritation to the respiratory system, and can be harmful to people with asthma or other respiratory conditions.

**Career in Media**

You’re looking to make a career in media. You have first language spoken and written English. Style and clarity in writing are your forte. You are also proficient in Nepali. A good visual and design sense. Eager to learn and explore new ideas. You have video skills, or can learn fast. You believe journalism is not just a job.

**Our Pick**

Satishbabu Karki’s multiple award-winning 2017 Odia film Drama A Fantastic Woman follows aspiring singer Marina, a young transgender woman living in Santiago in Chile, whose life is upended following the death of her partner Orlando. Following his death, a grieving Marita is forced to grapple with how to be the woman she never was. Marita’s family takes in her as her actions are picked up and scrutinized. Stars Danielia Vega, François Arnaud, Luis Guerra, and more.
Saniaa Shah

TECH AWAY

Some of you will remember the roaring 90s, when AOL chat rooms were a way to pass time talking to, or flirting with, strangers. Well, two decades later here comes Clubhouse.

The difference is that Clubhouse is voice-based (no texting allowed) and on mobile (not available on desktop or tablet). Browsing through the tops of many other social media platforms, Clubhouse has made its way into our mobile app galleries as a social media app that is now trending worldwide.

Clubhouse is a voice-only app that allows users to drop in and out of ‘rooms’ created to explore a specific topic through instant voice chatting, almost like a phone call. It is a virtual world where conversations are called Rooms and are usually launched by a Club, run by people who are enthusiastic about a particular area of interest.

Each room has Speakers, who are visible immediately once you enter a room and see the ‘Stage’ section of the app page, out of which at least one person is a Moderator, whose assigned role is to host everyone, mute users, remove users from the room, and pull up a listener or audience member to become speakers.

The invite-only app allows existing users a handful of invites to deluge out to their friends who they think will take to Clubhouse. You enter a room muted, and if you want to speak, you raise your hand and a moderator can invite you to speak to everyone. The ‘Leave quietly’ button is a crowd favourite and the home page is called your Hallway, which only shows active conversation rooms.

The platform thrives on ephemeral content, with audio recordings that disappear instantly once the conversation is over and the room is closed. Clubhouse is an opportunity for introverts to be social, as the lack of video feature makes it a more comfortable, welcoming space for those who feel shy or conscious in front of new people.

The app fills a void formed by the pandemic and serial lockdowns, a unique time in history that has made many people feel lonely and bored. Compared to the performative nature of Facebook usage and exhibitionist style of Instagram feeds, Clubhouse seems to be more equitable and meaningful.

That said, Clubhouse comes with its downsides. Its addictive nature is worrying. It causes FOMO. Users have complained that it feels like everyone is selling something, whether it is themselves, or their brands. Personal ego and desire for popularity can blur the quality of conversation, as everybody dives into all kinds of rooms and when they like.

Moreover, Clubhouse rooms do not always stick to the stated topic of discussion, as people with their anecdotes and trivial thoughts. Many users have begun to find it time-consuming and toxic, after entering a few disappointing rooms and waiting their turn.

One anonymous Nepali user says, “Other social media do not compare to the dopamine rush it gives you; you are speaking to strangers and getting immediate feedback in return.”

For many Nepalis, Clubhouse has been a convenient outlet for discussing socially sensitive topics such as divorce, intercultural relationships, LGBTQIA+ matters. When signing up, the app only requests you to share your phone number and name which makes it easy for those who seek privacy to engage publicly using a pseudonym.

A few popular Nepali clubs on the app are ‘Virtual Chha Puast’, ‘Nepal Korakani’, ‘Entrepreneurship in Nepal’, ‘Tech Talka Nepal’, and ‘Traveling Nepal’. Clubs that existed outside Clubhouse have found a new platform to foster an existing community, such as ‘Tourmasters Nepal’ and ‘Nepal Foodies’. From cyclists to environmentalists, sports to football fans, Clubhouse serves as a space to find fellow enthusiasts of every kind, giving a strong sense of community to those who struggle to find their kind of office.

User Anzma Pradhan demonstrates how subjective experiences can be, by sharing her story of attending a life club hosted by a Nepali in the US that many thirty-something Nepalis found reliable and insightful. She says, “Everyone in that room connected at some level, giving each other support. That’s probably the best one I’ve attended so far, when I could be myself.”

Off, podcasts, motivational speakers and comedians have flocked to Clubhouse after not being able to speak to live audiences due to the pandemic. Being naturally talented orators, they enjoy hosting and interacting with an audience, only without professional editing, sound effects, transitions and ad breaks.

The pandemic has given people a lot of free time, and users have been logging on at all hours, even in the middle of the afternoon, because they are working from home and taking full advantage of it.

Saniaa Shah wrote for fortnightly online tech news, news for Nepali times, and radio Studio Radio, often producing audio.

For more details, scan the QR code.
Nepal braces for monsoon—another high risk flood and landslide season

Anil Pokhrel

The 2022 southwest monsoon was forecast to be “normal” in Nepal, but it turned out to be more intense than predicted, and lasted much longer. It triggered numerous flash floods and landslides, killing at least 400 people and destroying over 1,000 houses. Dozens of villages in Sindupalchok, Jajarkot, Myagdi, Baglung, Kalikot and Bajura districts were buried.

The South Asian Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) has forecast above-normal rainfall for most of Nepal this year, with more than usual precipitation in most of the Mahabharat and Himalaya, and slightly deficient rainfall in the eastern parts. “There is a possibility of floods, landslides and other water-related disasters occurring together during the third and fourth week of July this year when the second wave of the pandemic will still be peaking,” states the government’s National Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan 2023. The probability of flash-floods and landslides are even higher this year because of the climate change. The number estimated was 75 of Nepal’s 77 districts from November 2020 to May 2021, the highest number ever recorded.

The first钹ird wave of COVID-19 in Nepal is said to be ‘normal’ in Nepal, it triggered numerous flash floods and landslides, killing at least 400 people and destroying over 1,000 houses. Dozens of villages in Sindupalchok, Jajarkot, Myagdi, Baglung, Kalikot and Bajura districts were buried. The South Asian Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) has forecast above-normal rainfall for most of Nepal this year, with more than usual precipitation in most of the Mahabharat and Himalaya, and slightly deficient rainfall in the eastern parts. “There is a possibility of floods, landslides and other water-related disasters occurring together during the third and fourth week of July this year when the second wave of the pandemic will still be peaking,” states the government’s National Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan 2023.

The probability of flash-floods and landslides are even higher this year because of the climate change. The number estimated was 75 of Nepal’s 77 districts from November 2020 to May 2021, the highest number ever recorded.

The first red impres the stion of the government’s National Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan 2023. The probability of flash-floods and landslides are even higher this year because of the climate change. The number estimated was 75 of Nepal’s 77 districts from November 2020 to May 2021, the highest number ever recorded.

The first red impres the stion of the government’s National Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan 2023. The probability of flash-floods and landslides are even higher this year because of the climate change. The number estimated was 75 of Nepal’s 77 districts from November 2020 to May 2021, the highest number ever recorded.

The first red impres the stion of the government’s National Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan 2023. The probability of flash-floods and landslides are even higher this year because of the climate change. The number estimated was 75 of Nepal’s 77 districts from November 2020 to May 2021, the highest number ever recorded.
-pandemic double hit

Landslides in the last decade
From 2011-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Landslides</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

work primarily on preparedness and mitigating risk, while delegating more rescue responsibility to first-responders in local governments.

In earlier years landslides were not discussed as part of our monsoon preparedness plan, only floods were, and this year we set landslides as a priority for preparedness and response also looking at the intersection of wildfires, Covid-19 and the monsoon,” says Anil Pokhrel, who heads NDRRMA that has produced a workplan for monsoon preparedness and response. (See op- ed, below) The NDRRMA with ODH recently trained officials in 56 municipalities in nine of the most high-risk districts (Myagdi, Gorkha, Kalikot, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchok, Rijang, Jajarkot, Syangja and Dhulekh) on impact based Forecasting which predicts extreme weather events so that at-risk groups can be ready.

“We are seeing not just with floods and landslides this time, but also Covid-19. Local communities are setting up rapid response teams to best prevent an outbreak in shelters and maintain health protocols, and spreading awareness through FM radios in local languages,” says Lila Bahadur Adhikari of the NDRRMA.

Despite the “above normal” forecast in the monsoon, climate scientist Ngamindra Dalal expects the monsoon to even out unless Nepal experiences cloudbursts over the Mahabharat and Gauri ranges. These sudden heavy showers have been the cause of the deadliest floods and landslides in recent years.

“We now have the technology to predict localised cloudbursts through Impact Based Forecasting which is crucial in saving lives, all we need now is real-time action so local communities get advance warning,” says Dalal.

But predicting and determining the impact of floods and landslides only from the perspective of weather gives us an incomplete picture. The climate crisis has changed precipitation patterns and made extreme weather events more frequent and destructive. Poorly designed and built roads, bad engineering, and unplanned settlements have disturbed fragile mountain slopes, making them more disaster-prone.

“We have in recent times recorded 100mm rain per hour in Surkelet, 100mm in Rijang and 73 in Kuri Khaiti which is a clear indication that the monsoon is getting more intense, but we are only now trying to understand this trend,” says Dalal. “We need to see whether there are indeed more frequent cloudbursts, or if the disasters are more noticed because they affect new settlements in floodplains and roads that follow river banks.”

At the NDRRMA, Lila Bahadur Adhikari agrees that in addition to rapid response and rescue, a new development model is crucial in preventing multiple hazards in the long term. “New infrastructure has to adhere to environmental safeguards so that they do not drastically alter the rural landscape and make them more vulnerable to disasters.”

Unfortunately, Nepal’s approach to development has been at the expense of nature preservation. The annual budget announced last week will allow quarrying on the already-unsustainable slopes of Himalayan foothills to export stones and aggregates to India.

Epidemiologist Bhamu Yangchen Sherpa has been to several emergency shelters recently, and points out that there is an additional burden on women during disasters.

She says: “Like before and during this coronavirus crisis, women are especially vulnerable in the aftermath of a disaster, we must support them with security in shelters, physical and mental health care during this monsoon in the middle of a pandemic.”
All rise

We start this regular Backside column with a mandatory singing of Nepal’s national anthem. Please raise your tiny flags and stand in an upright position. All together now: ‘Rasham phiriti, rasham phiriti...’

You may now sit. In times of turmoil, we need to remind ourselves of the symbols of nationhood that are important to us. The national flower rhododendron. The national bird: the macaw. National animal: the rhino. And the national knife: kukri.

However, our serious attention has been drawn to reports that text books are still being sold to students containing maps of Nepal, in which an appendix containing an amendment to the Limpetfish Act has been performed. All publishers are required forthwith to replace the appendage and restore our national pride.

Who says Nepal is languishing? This government has recognized a momentous milestone in the country’s history by installing an overseas bridge at Benazir Interchange. No previous government was able to take such a Great Leap Forward.

How can the country ever get ahead if we are not proud of our country’s achievements, precisely because there is so little to be proud of? We have to re-instil a sense of national pride by singing the anthem, because during the lockdown schools and cinemas have stopped playing them.

The Ministry of Tourism and Tourism therefore must immediately make it compulsory for the national anthem to be sung loudly at every opportune moment, beginning with:

1. The national anthem should be played every day of the week at the start of every hour on every class. This is because students are out of practice and may have forgotten the lyrics.
2. All Nepal’s citizens must have to stand and singing as the national anthem is played before every weekly meeting. Failure to do so will result in prosecution under the draconian National Security and Sedition Act. It also sets solid gameplay of its heft to its fullness for approved and immediate recording, and/or a $5 fine, or both.
3. Television news reports are required from the cost to us to start the perfect bullets by singing the national anthem in a dawn with free to air.
4. All flights departing from Kathmandu airport shall play the national anthem on the public address system of every aircraft en route's air space, and put the pre-lading safety announcements. At this point, all Nepal passengers will be required to stand, as a mark of respect, even if the Fasted Seat Belt sign has already been turned on.
5. Members of the Lower House of Parliament will have to sing the national anthem every time the legislature is convened by order of the Supreme Court.
6. At all schools throughout the federal republic that are still in working condition and have not yet been struck down will have to play a fact-based version of the national anthem after the photo is edited and before dispersing cash.
7. In the national interest, all party parties will be required to play a fact-based version of ‘Superstar Prachha’ all in Hindi during weddings instead of Bollywood numbers so guests can dance along.
8. It has always been difficult for the authorities to enforce the rule that no Nepalis are allowed into Kathmandu’s casinos. After the lockdown, management will play the national anthem every time the players machine starts spinning. Nepal will then naturally cool off allowing casino security to take them.
9. From now on, all Nepali members of the national anthem will have to sing the national anthem with gusto by resolving the parent of M. Suresh, from Nepal’s citizens can sing A Hast Abhi.

The end.


TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF POWERFUL & ADVANCED CARS FROM TATA MOTORS

SAFETY IS NEW FOREVER

Driving Pleasure is New Forever

Design is New Forever

B5 ENGINE

Safest Range with 5-Star and 4-Star Rated Cars
Multi-drive Modes
Automatic Transmission
Powerful B5 Engines
Panoramic Sunroof

SIPRADI